DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 201 621 SP 018 013

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TITLE Centerstage: A Simulation Game for Teacher Center Policy Boards.
PUB DATE [80]
NOTE 14p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Attitudes; Decision Making; Elementary Secondary Education; Governance; *Governing Boards; Informal Leadership; Inservice Teacher Education; *Interaction Process Analysis; *Management Games; *Policy Formation; Power Structure; Role Perception; *Role Playing; Simulation; Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Centers

ABSTRACT

According to legislation, a teacher center governing board should be composed of a majority of elementary and secondary teachers, including those from the special and the vocational fields; representatives from local institutions of higher education; and the school board. A simulation game, designed to provide board members with an understanding of the dynamics of a policy board, is described. Participants assume a role different from their present professional stance so that they can experience the vested interests and choices of a person in another professional position. A scenario for the simulated board meeting is outlined. For each role, the professional interests are delineated. Individuals are given a chance to decide what their self-interests are in regard to sets of issues that will be brought up at the board meeting. Results of field tests of this game are described, and possibilities for future use of this educational technique are considered. (JD)

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ED201621

CENTERSTAGE: A SIMULATION GAME FOR TEACHER CENTER POLICY BOARDS

INTRODUCTION

Teacher Center legislation mandates the existence of a governing board whose responsibility is to monitor the teacher center. This policy board must be comprised of a majority of elementary and secondary teachers, including both special and vocational education, representatives from local institutions of higher education, and school board. Other role groups can be invited to participate or serve in an ex officio capacity by the orginally constituted Policy Board. According to the grant guidelines, policy board membership for teachers may be determined in any of the following ways:

1. Selection based on an agreement between the local education agency and teachers' collective bargaining agent or its representative members.
2. Selection by collective bargaining agent.
3. Selection of representatives by the teachers' organization with the largest number of members.
4. Selection by general or individual school election in which all teachers in the area served by the center participate.
5. Any combination of above methods which permits teacher nomination or selection or representatives.

As of 1980, over 90 federally funded centers were functioning, each with a policy board. The purpose of Centerstage is to provide educational personnel, interested in questions of governance and in the teacher center program, a simulation of policy board activity. The game, Centerstage, derives its name from Allen Schmeider, Teacher Center Program Chief, who declared, at an initial National Teacher Center meeting, "For the first time, teachers are centerstage in the educational process."

This simulation has been field tested at local, regional and national levels with inservice teachers, federally funded teacher center policy boards and at the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Conference. Roleplaying is

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integral to this simulation. Participants are asked to draw a role different from their present professional responsibility so they can experience the vested interests and choices a person in that professional position might be supporting. There are two sets of questions that can be used in the game. The first series are typical decisions policy boards have been making in their initial stages of development. For many policy boards, the second set of questions are potential issues. The format of the game as it has been presented to various groups follows.

Objectives

CENTERSTAGE has as its purpose to:

1. Familiarize players with some of the fundamental issues that might be dealt with on a teacher center policy board.
2. Allow players to explore the vested interests and roles of teacher center policy board members.
3. Involve participants in a simulation of policy board interaction.

Scenario

The purpose of a teacher center is to provide a setting which focuses on the interests and needs voiced by teachers. The statute which authorizes funds for the establishment of teacher centers defines "teacher center" as "a site which serves teachers from public and non-public schools of a state, or an area or community within a state, in which teachers, with the assistance of such consultants and experts as may be necessary, may develop and produce curriculum, utilize research findings, and provide training to improve the skills of teachers to meet better the educational needs of their students." (Section 532 (a) (2) of Title V-B of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as enacted by Section 153 of the Education Amendments of 1976, P.L. 94-482).

A movement is underway in your region for the establishment of a teacher center. Teachers in the local school system have identified a need for more and improved opportunities for inservice training and curriculum development. At the same time, the local university wants to create a better field site for student teacher experiences. Approximately 3,000 teachers and 62,000 students will be served by

one teacher center site over a seventy mile radius. The area is rural and suburban.

The activities of teacher centers are monitored by a teacher center policy board. The majority of its members are elementary and secondary school classroom teachers; vocational and special education teachers must be represented. Representatives of the school board and higher education also serve as members. Policy Boards may include state department officials and professional organization representatives. You have been appointed as a member of the Policy Board for this region. For this game, the number of representatives on the Policy Board will be seven. In reality, sizes of policy boards vary.

TABLE 1

GAME PARTICIPANTS

1. Elementary Teacher

You are a second grade teacher in your third year of teaching. You enjoy small group work individualizing in your classroom, and designing materials for your students. Although you enjoyed college, you feel as though few courses related to your present experience. You are anxious to be a part of the Policy Board and help in planning the center; however, you wonder what the administrators will think if you disagree with their opinions, and are intimidated by authorities. Rules and precedents bore you; you want to create.

2. Junior High Teacher

Teacher professional organizations in your region are becoming more organized, vocal, and dominant. Teacher leaders from professional organizations fight for teacher representation. As a teacher you stress that teacher centers must be what their name implies -- programs run by and for teachers. Pseudoparticipation is not acceptable. Teacher centers should give teachers the right to determine for themselves the training they need. All possible control of the teacher centers should be in the hands of local classroom teachers, rather than the hands of local superintendents, college professors, or local and state politicians. Once underway, teacher centers will have to work to develop their own program and to protect their teacher center from becoming an "administrator center". You have been teaching five years and are highly active in your professional organization.

3. Secondary Teacher

At age fifty-one, you have spent thirty years in the same school system. You are excited about the possiblity of teachers having a voice in their own professional development. You are concerned about the gap you see between content and textbooks at the secondary level and student abilities. You wonder about

reluctant and unmotivated students. You express specific concerns that the center offers opportunities that include and are beneficial to secondary teachers; a bookstore, a specific subject area content, and individual consultation are valuable in your eyes. Laminating machines are not high on your list. Because of your vast experience, you feel an equal match to anyone on the board.

4. Special Education Teacher, K-6

You have been a resource room teacher for three years, have established a parent volunteer program, assisted teachers in the school as a consultant and are the leader for Individualized Education Planning meetings for children. You advocate strongly for the rights of the handicapped.

5. School System Administrator

As an administrator in the schools every day you believe you have an understanding of teacher needs. For those teachers you consider professional you feel admiration; those who are just there to do a job, you tolerate. Having been instrumental in obtaining several field-based projects, you sometimes believe that the more you do for teachers the more they expect. You wonder if teachers have had enough experience in decision-making and management situations, so you want to help them in these areas. Release time considerations worry you since teacher time away from the job of teaching may affect community reactions. You believe teachers need to be with students. Of particular interest to you are community reaction and budget decisions. You resent higher education because they are "ivory-towerish" and not in the trenches where you are. You are concerned about the increasing organization of teachers and the division that is growing between teachers and administrators

6. Higher Education Representative

As a college teacher, you feel devalued by the Teacher Center Program Legislation since only 10% of the total funding was allotted for college/university use. You are interested in consultant work being provided for in the budget and in evluation of teacher's centers to see if they offer any unique features in staff

development. You see yourself as a change agent and the logical thinker, helping others in decision making. You are fearful that teachers will become incestuous and no longer look to university faculty for staff development support. Combining theory and practice is a high priority for you and teacher effectiveness is of interest.

7. State Department Official

You see your role as one of offering technical assistance and monitoring or overseeing the project. Following state and federal regulations is of utmost importance to you. You see higher education as not effectively meeting the needs of teachers in the past. However, you are unsure of teacher competence in administration of staff development and fear that teachers will not develop inservice representative of a comprehensive view of educational needs. Blending preservice and inservice education, quality programming, and eliciting priorities are your interests.

Game Rules and Format

15 Minute Introduction and Card Distribution

Each participant receives a card. Each card contains two important pieces of information. (1) the role the player will assume during the game. (2) and a number which automatically places the participants into one of several policy board groups.

15 Minute Common Roles Caucus

Once participants get their cards, they will meet in groups based on common roles for a 15 minute caucus (e.g., all administrators in one group, all teachers in one group, etc.). In the caucus groups, players will receive a profile description of who they are (See Table 1). Next, the purpose of the caucus is to give individuals a chance to decide what their self-interests are in regard to following issues:

SET 1

1. Location of teacher center site (e.g., university, school, state department).
2. Needs assessment strategies.
3. Selection of staff.
4. Evaluation of teacher center staff.
5. Teacher center program.
6. Budget
7. Mini awards
8. Center publicity
9. Teacher involvement
10. Teacher center evaluation

SET 2

1. Policy board roles and responsibility.
2. Decisions on credit for coursework.
3. Amount of release time for teachers' professional/personal development.
4. Curriculum content and textbook selection in classroom.
5. Teacher evaluation.
6. Professional teacher preparation.
7. Responsibility for certification.
8. Decisions on research topics on the practice of teaching.

Policy Board Convenes for 30 Minutes

After 15 minutes, each player will divide into regions based on their number. In their mixed groups, they will form a policy board for their region which will collaborate on decisions affecting the teacher center. Once in your group you are to:

a. Elect a chairperson, who will insure that the group stays on task and coordinates group process.

b. The following issues emerge on your policy board. Your task is to discuss there issues and make recommendations as a board.

SET 1

1. Where should the teacher center be located?
2. What kinds of needs assessment strategies should we use?
3. What qualifications do teacher center staff need?
4. In what ways should center staff be evaluated?
5. What kinds of programs should be offered at the center? What teacher interests have been expressed?
6. What items are essential to a budget? How much should we allocate to each?
7. What kinds of teacher projects should received mini awards?
8. How can we publicize the center?
9. How can we involve teachers?
10. Who should be responsible for evaluating the teacher center and what methods of evaluation should be used?

SET 2

1. What is the role of the Policy Board?
2. Who decides what inservice education receives University credit? Renewal credit?
3. How much, if any, release time should teachers have for their own professional and personal development?
4. Who decides curriculum content and selects textbooks in classrooms?
5. Who evaluates teachers? What should or could be the center's role in teacher evaluation?
6. What professional prepartion should preservice teachers have?
7. Who makes certification decisions?
8. How much influence should teachers have in research that is conducted in the schools?

30 Minutes Processing — In your policy board groups, share your responses to the questions on the CENTERSTAGE PROCESSING FORM.

30 Minutes Chairperson's Report — Policy Board Chairperson present the decision making process and recommendations related to the issues which were discussed by this board.

TABLE 2

CENTERSTAGE PROCESSING FORM

In your Policy Board groups, share your responses to the following questions:

1. What understandings about Policy Board roles did you gain?
2. What self-interests did you see evidenced in the other five roles? Which ones seem related to the real world? How much did your self-interests interfere with decision-making?
3. How did you achieve your goals or interests? What strategies did you use?

   Collaborate (Win/Win) -- When x and y have the same, similar or unconflicting self-interests. If x wins, y also wins.

   Fight (Win/Lose) -- When x and y have conflicting self-intersts. If x wins, y loses.

   Negotiate (Exchange/Compromise) -- When x and y have conflicting self-intersts but fight it too costly and unncessary. X and y exchange value for value.
4. In your role, what values might you have to compromise to work with this Policy Board?
5. What decisions were you able to make as a group?
6. How much did decision-making on your Policy Board reflect the notion that teachers are centerstage?

RESULTS OF FIELD TESTS

Two observers recorded discussions of the various groups. Typically, in the beginning stages, participants' responses were given. Stereo types and role expectations inhibited their ability to compromise or even listen. A few groups had difficulty selecting a chairperson, the first task. Differences of opinion existed on nearly every issue even after the groups began working together with more ease.

Concerning center location, university representatives argued that they already had such facilities, while teachers argued that more teachers would come to an accessible school. A few teacher policy board representatives wanted the location at their school. State Department officials suggested that perhaps teachers would be willing to forego proximity if they were given time to travel and access to considerable resources and statewide communication network. Most groups decided that locally based activity was the focus of the program and that activities should be held close to teachers and near public schools.

To varying degrees, the groups affirmed the policy board role of leadership and control of teacher center activities in regard to staff development. Teachers should be in charge, but that did not exclude other groups from participating and helping. Several administrators stated they would be willing to identify school needs and submit these to the teacher center. University and state department personnel pointed out that other organizations have expertise in offering inservice. Teachers responded that the needs should come from teachers. It appeared that a general statement supporting teacher responsibility was agreed upon by the simulation policy boards, but that details around this issue would be points of contention later.

Most role groups expressed desire for increasing field-based work and credit for experiences outside the university setting with quality control as part of the system. A few university members noted that field based activities were not held in much esteem on campus. Several secondary teachers mentioned the the need for

library and resources, for they are usually located at universities. Some members advocated using renewal credit instead of university credit for teacher center activities. As expected, administrators voiced concerns about release time including problems in obtaining quality substitutes, loss of continuity in classrooms when the regular teacher is gone, and potential negative community reaction. Some teachers did not want to leave classes because of the disruption caused or because they belived no one could adequately pick up their class.

Groups were divided on the question of textbook selection. Some members wanted an organized system. A secondary teacher argued that her students were not able to handle the books so that only bits and pieces were used anyway. Some wanted a broader perspective than teacher a committee. Generally, it was decided that teachers with help from other sources should do the selecting.

Professional preparation drew much comment from participants. Some said four years academic training needed to be followed by a year apprenticeship, while others believed that quality of instruction rather than length of time was the problem. Members recommended teachers set forth criteria and universities play a secondary role of special assistance. Certification should be looked at as a continuous growth, a flow. One group member suggested educational philosophers could deal with this question.

Teachers indicated they felt used in research. That is, people ask them questions; they cooperate, but generally receive little feedback. In addition, most research topics have been uninteresting to practitioners. Teachers wanted research personnel to help them develop research of value to the classroom.

It was pointed out that both the Policy Board and the Office of Education have legitimate interests in evaluating centers. State Department representatives declared that accountability to the public was essential. State representatives offered to constitute committees to design evaluative schemes. Evaluation did not seem as a punishment, and accountability was viewed by most as expected honesty. An outside evaluation team was recommended to give impartial feedback. Other teachers and policy board members could serve as visiting teams. While subjectivity in evaluation was to be minimized, there was concern that the criteria fit the situation.

The responsibility of teacher evaluation was hotly debated. While teachers were uncomfortable with the present laissez-faire system that often exists, all were not ready to take on the task of peer evaluation. They saw they were doing the job with no input, but wondered about the effect of peer review on their relationships. Problems with administrators and lack of contact in classrooms was discussed. No clear decision was reached.

Futher Use of the Simulation

Most immediately, the game provides a format for teacher center policy boards to explore potential role differences or to voice safely the divergencies that exist. However, broader uses of the game are possible. Its basic structure facilitates discussion of any educational issues by varied role groups. This structure includes: a) Provision of somewhat conflicting role descriptions, b) Provision of a series of issues on which decisions must be made, c) Time for caucus groups to consolidate positions on issues, d) Meeting of unlike roles to make desicions, e) Examination of each groups' process, f) Whole group sharing of decisions reached and the process.

The game has generated much interest from Teacher Center personnel and other educators. The level of interaction of players, their ability to discern self-

interests, and to explore ways to reach decisions within the structure of the game suggests that it is a valuable experience, for those who wish to examine the path to collaboration.

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